

lower hock bones are naturally becoming fixed (natural splint) and the splint bones are becoming but processes of the large metacarpal (natural splint), but the study of hybrids tends to give us precise information as to how we are to breed the exact sort of horse that we require. It is interesting to observe that horse-breeding, which has hitherto been empirical, is showing signs of becoming a ductive science with a certain amount of exactitude in it. I trust this record of a few thoughts about horses will prove of interest to the Society.

ZOOLOGICAL NOTES.

SNAKE-BREEDING FOR THE GOVERNMENT REWARD.

THE Government of Bombay recently addressed our Society on the subject of the rewards paid for the destruction of poisonous snakes in the districts of Satara and Ratnagiri. The opinion of the Society was solicited on various points, and, amongst others, the question was raised as to whether there was likely to be any truth in the rumours that snakes were frequently bred in confinement by the people, in those districts, for the sake of the Government reward.

The following is an extract from the reply written to Government by Mr. H. M. Phipson, the Honorary Secretary, on 8th June 1887:—

“With regard to the last paragraph in your letter concerning the possibility of snakes being bred in confinement for the sake of Government reward, I have no hesitation in saying (and in this Mr. Vidal thoroughly agrees with me) that such a thing is highly improbable.

There are practically only four poisonous snakes, of any consequence, in the districts referred to, Satara and Ratnagiri. *viz.*—

1. The Cobra (*Naga tripudians*).
2. The Gunus (*Daboia elegans*).
3. The Phoorsa (*Echis carinata*).
4. The Krait (*Bungarus arcuatus*), of which the ~~latter~~ ^{last} is by no means common in those districts.

The Cobra has, to the best of my knowledge, never been known to breed in confinement, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether the Gunus and Phoorsa which are both viviparous, could be successfully propagated except in a most carefully constructed serpentarium.

The rumours respecting the breeding of poisonous snakes are probably founded on the fact that snakes' eggs are frequently picked up by the junglemen, who naturally keep them until they hatch, so as to claim the Government reward in the event of the snakes being poisonous; but this practice is one that should be encouraged.

It is also quite possible that gravid females of the Phoorsa (which is so common in Ratnagiri) have occasionally been kept for a short time after capture in order that the Government reward may be claimed on the young ones as soon as they are born, but there seems to be little or no harm in such a practice."

District Officers frequently refer to rumours regarding the existence of such practices, and as the subject is of interest both to the naturalist and to the economist, the sooner the truth is ascertained the better.

BOOK NOTICE.

The "Marchesa," an auxiliary screw steam yacht of 420 tons, Mr. C. Kettlewell master and owner, * * * left Cowes on the 8th January (1881) and reached Colombo April 24th, having touched at Socotra and Oolegaum Island (Maldives) * * *. She proceeded viâ Singapore to Formosa; and so far we have only quoted the author.

In a recent review we had to praise a writer for having written a readable account of the ordinary outward voyage to the East; but Dr. Guillemard has adopted a counsel of perfection (given by Horace), ignored a few thousand preliminary knots altogether, and introduced us to the "Marchesa," running in towards the land to reconnoitre a fort at Nansha, the southern extremity of Formosa. This particular fort has deserved from the first, as some of our own Isle-forts do in their old age, the favour even of the Peace Society. For it was erected not for the fracture of heads, but "as a refuge for Shipwrecked Mariners"; in virtue of a treaty concluded in 1867, between General Le Gendre, U. S. Consul at Amoy; and Tok-e-tok, Paramount Chief of the Southern District of Formosa, to both of whom the acknowledgments of mariners are due. For before that; Tok-e-tok's subjects had been in the habit of murdering all strangers on whom they could lay hands, and were more than suspected of eating them.

The "Marchesa" made no experiments upon the improvement in their ways, but passed on to the low island of Samasana, formerly visited by the famous old Samarang; and by the Sylvia (1867). Here, however, her party found nothing in our line, but many domesticated Formosan deer (*cervus pseudaxis*) creatures looking like a cross between the English red-deer and our "chital." It will strike a familiar chord in the heart of every mofussilite reader to find that here, in what our author calls "the ultimate of Ultima Thules," he was waylaid on his return to his boat, and compelled to *examine the school*, just as he would have been here. Having discharged this duty under the slight difficulty caused by his not knowing the Chinese alphabet quite so well as the junior first form did, he sailed for Chock-e-day.

The virtue of the land of Chock-e-day, which is on the East Coast of Formosa, is that its mountains rise 7,000 feet almost sheer out of the sea, as is well shown

* *The Cruise of the "Marchesa" to Kamschatka and New Guinea; with notices of Formosa, Liu-Kiu, and various islands of the Malay Archipelago.* By H. H. Guillemard, M.A., M.D., &c., &c. London: John Murray, 1886.